

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-14

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NASSAU

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIS, PLOS, BF, US

SUBJECT:

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF LETTER DATED AUGUST 17, 1978, FROM
CONGRESSMAN DANTE FASCELL TO PRESIDENT CARTER CONCERNING
U.S. RELATIONS WITH THE BAHAMAS:

BEGIN TEXT:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS, A 13-YEAR OLD BOY WAS SERIOUSLY
WOUNDED WHEN GUNFIRE BROKE OUT BETWEEN OFFICIALS OF THE
BAHAMAS AND THE CREWS OF FISHING BOATS BASED IN FLORIDA.
IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE U.S. BOATS MAY HAVE BEEN VIOLAT-
ING THE LAWS OF THE BAHAMAS. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS WAS NOT
AN ISOLATED INCIDENT, BUT ONE OF A SERIES OF DEVELOPMENTS
INDICATIVE OF THE FACT THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED
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STATES AND THE BAHAMAS ARE NOT AS CLOSE AS THEY SHOULD BE.

THE BAHAMAS, NEXT TO CANADA AND MEXICO, IS THIS COUNTRY'S
CLOSEST NEIGHBOR. FAR MORE THAN GEOGRAPHICAL PROXIMITY,

HOWEVER, BINDS OUR TWO NATIONS TOGETHER. THERE ARE CLOSE
CULTURAL AND FAMILY TIES AND THE DESTINIES OF OUR TWO

PEOPLES HAVE OFTEN BEEN LINKED IN THE GREAT EVENTS WHICH HAVE SHAPED THIS HEMISPHERE. IN MY JUDGEMENT, THE UNITED STATES SHOULD SEEK JUST AS CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE BAHAMAS AS WE CAN HAVE.

MR. PRESIDENT, I FEAR THAT REPEATED FISHING INCIDENTS, COUPLED WITH CONTINUED INACTION ON A HOST OF BILATERAL ISSUES BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES, MAY SET IN MOTION FORCES WHICH COULD CAUSE AN IRREVERSIBLE DRIFT APART OF EITHER THE PEOPLE OF THE BAHAMAS OR THE UNITED STATES. IN ORDER TO END ANIMOSITY BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS AND TO ESTABLISH A NEW AND STRONG FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING OUR LONG-TERM RELATIONS WITH THE BAHAMAS, I URGE YOU TO INVITE PRIME MINISTER LYNDEN O. PINDLING TO WASHINGTON AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY FOR BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH YOU AND SENIOR OFFICIALS OF YOUR ADMINISTRATION.

TALKS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE BAHAMAS SHOULD HAVE AS AN IMMEDIATE GOAL, AN INTERIM FISHING AGREEMENT TO MINIMIZE THE CHANCE FOR A RECURRENCE OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN THE FUTURE. OTHER MATTERS WHICH MIGHT BE EXPLORED IN SUCH TALKS ARE:

1. ESTABLISHMENT OF A MECHANISM FOR NEGOTIATION OF A PERMANENT MARITIME AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE BAHAMAS.

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2. RESOLUTION OF NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING THE STATUS OF U.S. BASES IN THE BAHAMAS.

3. ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT MIXED CONSULTATIVE COMMISSION ON U.S.-BAHAMIAN ISSUES.

4. ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL UNITED STATES DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION FOR THE BAHAMAS.

5. EXPLORATION OF WAYS IN WHICH THE STATE OF FLORIDA, WITH FEDERAL ASSISTANCE, MIGHT BE ABLE TO EFFECTIVELY COMPLEMENT BAHAMIAN EFFORTS IN SUCH AREAS AS EDUCATION AND OCEANOGRAPHY.

THE FUTURE OF U.S.-BAHAMIAN RELATIONS MAY SEEM RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT WHEN COMPARED WITH THE GREAT ISSUES WHICH DAILY CONFRONT A PRESIDENT. THE BAHAMAS IS A SMALL NATION, BUT IT IS ONE WHOSE PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE ARE INEXTRICABLY INTERTWINED WITH OUR OWN. IT IS A COUNTRY WHOSE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING IS OF REAL CONSE-

QUENCE TO MANY PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES AND ESPECIALLY FLORIDA. IT IS A NATION WHICH PLAYS A SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT ROLE WITH RESPECT TO OUR NATIONAL SECURITY AND FINALLY, IT IS A COUNTRY WITH POTENTIALLY GREAT NATURAL RESOURCES, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREAS OF ENERGY AND MARINE RESOURCES.

MR. PRESIDENT, I AM AWARE OF THE GREAT BURDENS YOU BEAR AND IT IS NOT WITHOUT CAREFUL CONSIDERATION THAT I URGE YOUR PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN RESTORING U.S.-BAHAMIAN RELATIONS TO A SOUND FOOTING. IT IS MY CONVICTION THAT EVEN A SMALL INVESTMENT OF YOUR TIME COULD PAY ENORMOUS DIVIDENDS TO THE PEOPLES OF THE BAHAMAS AND THE UNITED STATES FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION.

SINCERELY,

DANTE B. FASCELL
CHAIRMAN
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

END TEXT.

CHRISTOPHER

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